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ABSTRACT

This report describes Austin, Texas' Austin Interfaith, which connects community institutions that can support families (e.g., schools, congregations, and civic organization) and builds the capacity of family members to participate fully in the economic system. Viewing schools as key neighborhood institutions, Austin Interfaith works directly with 18 public schools. It is one of five case studies in the Indicators Project on Education Organizing, which identified eight indicators of the impact of community organizing for school reform (leadership development, community power, social capital, public accountability, equity, school-community connection, positive school climate, and high quality curriculum and instruction). This report focuses on Austin Interfaith's accomplishments in four areas: leadership development, school-community connection, social capital, and educational equity. The report presents a model of the relationship of indicators to goals of the community organizing groups, introduces Austin Interfaith, describes the city and the new economy, and looks at indicators and measures. It concludes by discussing future directions for increasing participation by African Americans and changing the culture of the district. Three appendices present definitions of indicator areas, the Indicators Project advisory group, and Austin Interfaith charts (strategies, results, and data sources). (SM)

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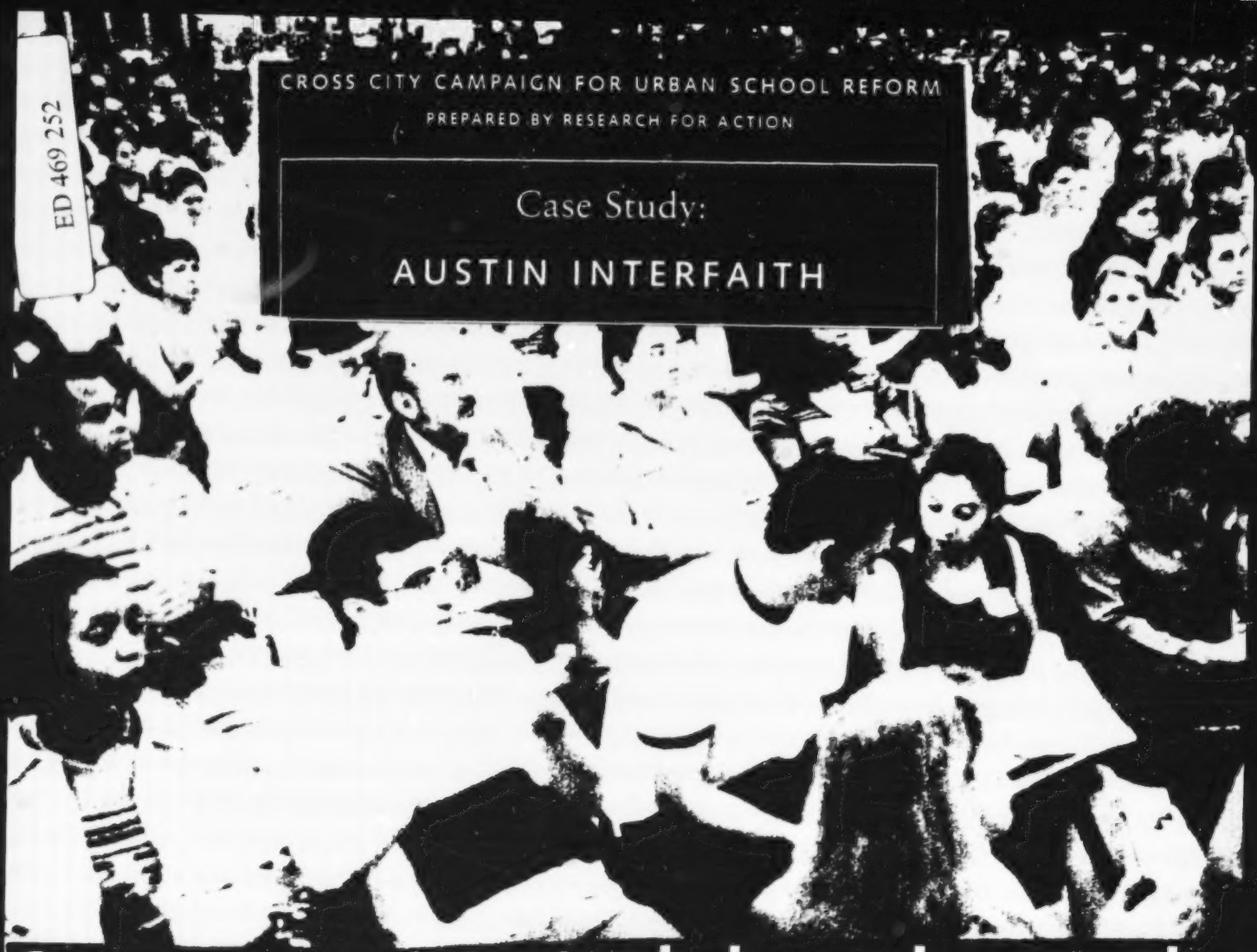
CROSS CITY CAMPAIGN FOR URBAN SCHOOL REFORM

PREPARED BY RESEARCH FOR ACTION

Case Study:

AUSTIN INTERFAITH



Strong Neighborhoods Strong Schools

The Indicators Project on Education Organizing

UD 035 293

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Case Study:

AUSTIN INTERFAITH

Prepared by

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with

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Chris Brown

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Strong Neighborhoods

Strong Schools

The Indicators Project on Education Organizing

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The Indicators Project on Education Organizing

Austin Interfaith is one of five case studies in *The Indicators Project*, an action-research project to document the contribution that community organizing makes to school reform, disseminate the findings, and forward the work these groups are doing. The project grows out of the work of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform's Schools and Community program. The Cross City Campaign believes that while there is widespread agreement among educators and the public on the importance of "parent involvement" and "parents as first teachers," there is far less understanding of the role that strong, well-informed, powerful organizations of parent and community leaders can play in school reform. The Cross City Campaign invited Research for Action, a non-profit educational research organization with a history of studying community-school relations, to be its partner in examining the contribution such organizations can make in bringing about quality educational experiences and equity for urban students and in strengthening low-income urban neighborhoods.

See report: *Successful Community Organizing for School Reform* for a full discussion of the Education Organizing Indicators Framework and how accomplishments in the indicator areas work together to bring about change in schools and communities.

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The aim of the research was to develop an Education Organizing Indicators Framework that documents observable outcomes in schools and student learning. We developed the Framework by looking at the activities of organizing groups across multiple sites and categorizing their work within eight key indicator areas. The eight indicator areas are: leadership development, community power, social capital, public accountability, equity, school/community connections, positive school climate, and high quality instruction and curriculum. (See Appendix A for definitions of the indicator areas). We also developed a Theory of Change that shows how work in each of the indicator areas contributes to building community capacity and improving schools—ultimately increasing student learning. (See p. 6 for a model of the Theory of Change.)

A major purpose of this report and the project's other case studies is to show the accomplishments of community organizing for school reform by using the Education Organizing Indicators Framework. We illustrate the utility of the Framework for documenting the contribution of community organizing groups to school reform by looking at selected organizing "stories" in some depth. In each report, we use four of the indicator areas to interpret the organizing stories, showing evidence that the group is making a difference. The report also shows the complexity and challenge of community organizing for school reform. It illustrates the range of strategies that groups use, how local context affects organizing and outcomes, as well as how organizing spurs and shapes local education reform.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUPS

Community organizing groups working for school reform share the following characteristics:

- They work to change public schools to make them more equitable and effective for all students.
- They build a large base of members who take collective action to further their agenda.
- They build relationships and collective responsibility by identifying shared concerns among neighborhood residents and creating alliances and coalitions that cross neighborhood and institutional boundaries.
- They develop leadership among community residents to carry out agendas that the membership determines through a democratic governance structure.
- They use the strategies of adult education, civic participation, public action, and negotiation to build power for residents of low- to moderate-income communities that results in action to address their concerns.

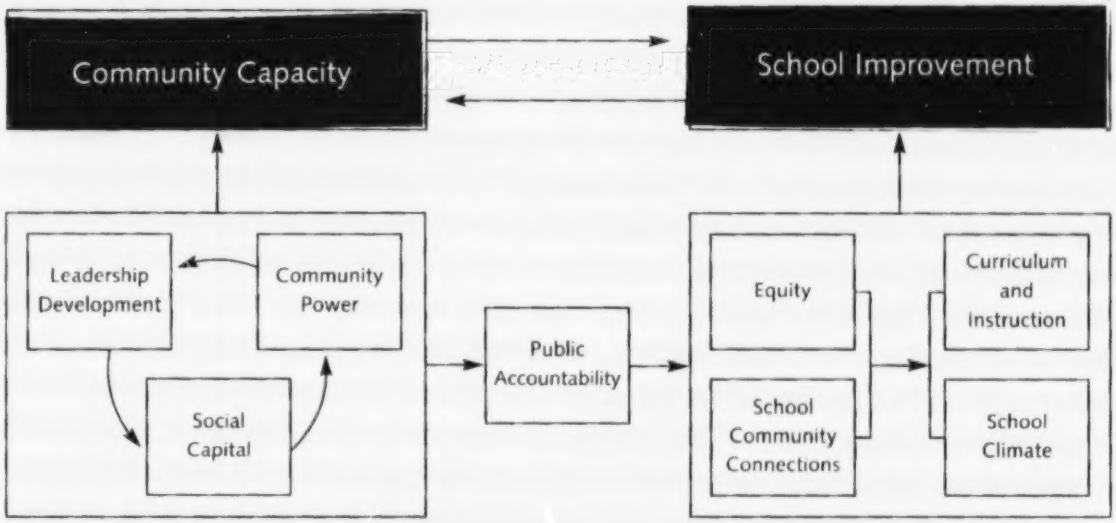
RESEARCH APPROACH

In order to develop an indicators framework the research design included four levels of investigation:

- Research for Action (RFA) and the Cross City Campaign (CCC) conducted a broad search and created a database of 140 community organizing groups working on school reform nationwide.
- RFA and CCC collaborated to select 19 groups for lengthy telephone interviews. Analysis of those interviews yielded a preliminary indicators framework.
- RFA and CCC, with the help of a national advisory group (see appendix B) selected five groups for case studies.
- RFA research teams and CCC staff conducted two site-visits of three days each in spring and fall of 2000 to each of the five sites. Interviews were conducted with a wide array of public school stakeholders, including parents, teachers, administrators, elected officials, and education reform groups. The researchers also observed community and school events relevant to local organizing.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT IS TO SHOW THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING.

Theory of Change: Relationship of Community Capacity Building and School Improvement



The theory of change model shows the pathway of influence between building community capacity and school improvement. Work in three indicator areas—leadership development, community power, and social capital—increases civic participation and leverages power through partnerships and relationships within and across communities, as well as with school district, civic, and elected officials. Public accountability is the hinge that connects community capacity with school improvement. Increased community participation and strong relationships together broaden accountability for improving public education for children of low- to moderate-income families. Public accountability creates the political will to forward equity and school/community connection, thereby improving school climate, curriculum, and instruction making them more responsive to communities, laying the basis for improved student learning and achievement. Stronger schools, in turn, contribute to strengthening community capacity.

Introduction to Austin Interfaith

With a focus on the well-being of families, Austin Interfaith has worked to connect community institutions that can support them, including schools, congregations, and civic organizations. In addition to strengthening institutional ties, Austin Interfaith also builds the capacity of family members to participate fully in the economic system. In the sixteen years that Austin Interfaith has been working on issues of concern to its members, it has been a catalyst in increasing public and private sector investment in families and neighborhoods through a number of initiatives. Viewing schools as key neighborhood institutions, Austin Interfaith works directly with eighteen public schools. It has also engaged businesses benefiting from city tax abatements in a living wage campaign, and partnered with the business community and Austin Community College to develop Capital IDEA, a program that provides long-term training and connections to jobs for adults in the community.

Adult education and public school reform are intertwined in Austin Interfaith's work. Its members have won millions of dollars in funding from the city and county to support Capital IDEA ($2 million pledged) as well as funding for adult ESL classes, after-school programs in twenty-eight schools, and $3.6 million in citywide school playground renovations. Each one of these efforts represents countless hours of organizing, reverses as well as forward movement, persistence, and constant "re-organizing" to maintain gains and continue momentum to win power, resources and desired changes.

For example, in the late 1980s Austin Interfaith engaged in an effort to influence spending for school construction. One tactic was to gather votes to defeat a bond issue that failed to direct funds to low-income schools most in need of repair and expansion. When the bond issue was amended so that low-income schools would benefit, Austin Interfaith leaders marshaled support for it. This "win" energized Austin Interfaith members, showed the power that low-income communities could wield through organized collective action, and increased Austin Interfaith's legitimacy and clout in the city.

The work of Austin Interfaith ranges across all eight indicator areas used in this project.[1] In this report, we point to measures of Austin Interfaith's accomplishments in its education reform efforts in four of the areas.[2] The four areas are:

- **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**
- **HIGH QUALITY CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**
- **PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY**
- **SCHOOL/COMMUNITY CONNECTION**

THE ALLIANCE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

IAF affiliates in Texas began work in public schools in the mid-1980s. IAF leaders developed a vision of schools with greater community involvement and a collaborative school culture that would challenge students and raise their achievement levels. The leaders formed a network of schools, known as the Alliance Schools Initiative, which by 2000 had grown to 118 schools. These schools serve low- to moderate-income communities in cities in the Southwest with IAF affiliates. In 1993, leaders in Texas IAF affiliates convinced the state legislature to provide funding for schools willing to innovate to improve student achievement, as long as the schools made a commitment to include community involvement as part of their restructuring strategies. The funding stream, called the Investment Capital Fund, is not limited to Alliance Schools. The amount of funding for the Investment Capital Fund, now at $20 million, has increased ten-fold from the original commitment.

NOTES

1. For a chart representing Austin Interfaith's work in all eight indicator areas, see Appendix C. This chart is not comprehensive, but does illustrate the kinds of strategies Austin Interfaith has used in each area and examples of its achievements.

2. The data supporting the accomplishments of Austin Interfaith were gathered during site visits in spring and fall 2000. The report is not comprehensive of all Austin Interfaith has accomplished, but is intended to illustrate what documentation and measurement of its accomplishments might look like.

Austin Interfaith

Austin Interfaith is an affiliate of the Southwest Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) Network, founded in the mid-1970s. Austin Interfaith, founded in 1985, is a multi-issue coalition of forty-five religious congregations, schools, and other institutions. It is one of the most diverse of the Texas IAF affiliates in its membership, ranging across religious denominations, economic levels, neighborhoods, and ethnic groups. While its member congregations are geographically distributed throughout Austin, many of the Alliance schools are on the East side of Austin and have significant numbers of low-income African-American, Asian and Hispanic students (although in some of the schools, less than 60 percent of the students are eligible for free lunch, and these schools, therefore, do not qualify for Title I funds.)

Austin Interfaith staff includes a Lead Organizer and two other full-time professional organizers. The staff is ethnically and racially diverse. The Lead Organizer is a white female and one organizer is an African-American male, the other a Hispanic female. Its co-chairs, a group of twelve leaders from among the member institutions, govern the organization. Agendas are also set through a collective leadership group (leaders from across member institutions) and an annual delegate assembly that draws hundreds of constituents.

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The City and the "New Economy"

The geography of Austin is partly defined by Interstate 35, which cuts through the city north to south and creates a physical boundary between the West side, whose population is more affluent and white, and the generally low-income and Hispanic East side. While the economic and social segregation in Austin is not absolute—some neighborhoods on either side of I-35 are diverse—most people in Austin consider the I-35 boundary an important symbol of economic and social inequality in the city. In relation to public education, segregation by ethnicity and economic level translates to fewer resources, and lower teacher quality and more turnover in the East side schools. Additional education concerns include access to magnet programs, high drop-out rates among low-income minority students, the availability and quality of bilingual programs, aging facilities, and concerns about safe passage to and from school—all in the face of shrinking school budgets. A busing program aimed at desegregating the Austin elementary schools ended over ten years ago, but the District never completely fulfilled promises to compensate by providing additional funds for low-income schools to recruit and retain teachers and improve their academic programs.

Austin's high tech economy boomed during the 1990s, and its population, wealth and property values grew significantly. Austin's experience is a reflection of an increasingly globalized and technologically advanced "new" economy. Those who benefit most from the high tech economy are well-educated and sophisticated career builders. While highly educated workers from all over the U.S. arrived to capitalize on Austin's boom, the city's immigrant population was also growing. Hispanic, Southeast Asian, and African-American adults and children in low-income areas of Austin, who lacked access to high quality schools and adult education opportunities, found themselves toiling on the lowest rungs of the high-tech ladder or left out of the "new economy" altogether. Just as I-35 divides Austin geographically, the split between high tech and service-oriented economies divides its workforce.

The Alliance Schools Initiative in Austin

"The Alliance Schools Initiative...is not just about improving the existing system of public education, but is instead about changing the culture of schools and of entire neighborhoods. Similarly, the Alliance Schools Initiative is not just about parental engagement, but is also designed to engage all of the stakeholders in public education...teachers, principals, and other members of the community.... In changing the culture of a campus, organizers ...begin by teaching parents and educators the art of conversation...which involves a reciprocal exchange of ideas, debate and compromise. [It] is relational and also the basis for what we call Civil Society in a community." FROM ALLIANCE SCHOOLS CONCEPT PAPER, FALL 1998

The Alliance Schools vision for public schools, articulated in the 1998 Alliance Schools Concept Paper, developed out of more than a decade of experience of Texas IAF affiliates engaging with individual schools to improve education in their member congregations' neighborhoods. The Fort Worth affiliate is credited as the first to engage over a long period with a local school, Morningside Middle School. Morningside is a predominately African-American school with test scores at the bottom of the list. The Morningside story spans a period of over ten years, starting in 1986, and exemplifies hard work and persistence on the part of the organizers, congregations and community members, teachers and the principal. The school eventually showed gains in test scores, but, just as significant, it also developed a more collaborative professional environment and increased school/community connection.

The experience of Forth Worth's IAF affiliate with Morningside Middle School inspired other Texas affiliates to work directly with schools as institutions. In 1990, Texas IAF leaders developed "The Texas IAF Vision for Public Schools: Communities of Learners,"

a formal statement of the philosophy, values, and goals underlying its work with schools. The document called for changing the "culture" of schools to reflect the values of collaboration and community engagement. This vision of public schools does not advocate specific programs, but rather emphasizes building the capacity to carry out processes for hearing the concerns of everyone in the school community, developing innovative responses, and reflecting on the effort. The IAF feels strongly that, in addition to creating a broad and committed constituency for public schools, changing the culture of schools is also essential to prepare students to meet the demands of the new information-based economy.

While the concepts laid out in the Texas IAF Vision for Public Schools have evolved and changed over the years, the basic tenets have endured. In 1993, Texas IAF leaders also influenced the state education agency to establish the Investment Capital Fund, which supports school reform that engages parents and communities. Any school in the state can apply for money from this fund, as long as its reform proposal includes the community and parents as authentic partners. Texas IAF affiliates have been able to sustain the state's commitment and even increase the size of the Investment Capital Fund through several state administrations of both parties.

Austin Interfaith began to work with schools in the late 1980s when education issues came up in house meetings with congregation members. Parent leaders began working with two schools on the East side on issues of safety and playgrounds. While parents were able to raise money and get a playground built in one of the schools, Austin Interfaith was not satisfied with the level of its involvement with the first two schools, especially knowing the successes of IAF affiliates in other cities. They found that there was resistance among principals to any deeper involvement.

When leaders began work with Zavala Elementary School in East Austin, they sought and won the principal's commitment to public conversation that included all of the school's stakeholders. This principal had won his position with the support of local community members, so he was disposed to strong community and parent involvement and committed to change. The involvement in Zavala began at a 1991 PTA meeting in which a parent angrily raised the issue of why there was such a big disparity between students' grades and their attainment on the Texas state achievement tests (TAAS—the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills). Once the facts were out on the table for teachers and parents alike to grapple with, Austin Interfaith had an opening to begin work with teachers and parents.

The work began with teachers and Austin Interfaith leaders making home visits, holding house meetings and an accountability session in the local Catholic Church, and eventually having a "walk for success." Teachers learned about issues in the community that had affected parent involvement and children's readiness for school. The successes of organizing at Zavala, well documented in Dennis Shirley's book *Community Organizing for Urban School Reform*,[3] include winning a health clinic and the addition of a sixth grade Young Scientists Program aimed at increasing access of Zavala students to the nearby Kealing Middle school, which has a science magnet program.

Zavala's principal became a strong Austin Interfaith leader and brought other Austin schools into the network when he moved on. He also mentored several teachers and encouraged them to become principals. They too have brought schools into the Alliance network and are mentoring others. The intensity of Zavala's community engagement has varied over time, but through the commitment of its teachers it still has a strong collaborative and democratic culture among school staff and with parents/community members. Zavala provides insight into how a school can join the Alliance network, but there is no one route by which a school becomes affiliated. Austin's Alliance Schools also fluctuate over time in their adherence to Alliance Schools principles.

Out of 100 schools in the Austin Independent School District (AISD), the number of schools in Austin's Alliance network has grown to eighteen (as of December 2000). Most are elementary schools. There are also two middle schools and one high school. Another high school is in the "courtship" phase.

NOTES

3. Dennis Shirley, *Community Organizing for Urban School Reform*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997.

THE ORGANIZING PROCESS FOR ALLIANCE SCHOOLS

There is some variation in the way that schools enter the Alliance Schools network. Generally the process starts with one-on-one conversations between an organizer and parents, teachers, or administrators. These one-on-ones involve an exchange of views, developing relationships, and cultivating leaders. Parent leaders organize house meetings of 10-15 people who identify shared concerns that can translate into issues and a future action agenda. After an agenda is developed, parents and teachers do neighborhood walks or "walks for success" to broaden the constituency for school change.

There are at least three ways in which the work in Austin stands out as an example of a powerful Alliance Schools network with significant impact. Below we portray: 1) the strength of the network in Austin and the extent to which it is embedded in Austin Interfaith's social and human capital development work; 2) the District's recognition of the Alliance Schools as having a strong capacity for reform; and 3) the growth of leaders that sustain the Alliance Schools network in Austin.

Participants in Alliance Schools have many opportunities to interact and support each other, which has built a strong network among the Alliance Schools in Austin. First, schools and congregations, linked in "Alliance Communities," work together as neighborhood institutions to strengthen families and develop their communities. Parents and community members from across Alliance Schools form a "collective leadership" group that identifies issues that affect many schools. For example, parents in Alliance schools in Austin are concerned about the educational opportunities their children have after they leave elementary school. Alumni clubs have formed where students who have graduated from the elementary school come back in the afternoons to visit and tutor younger children. More recently, Austin Interfaith has begun working to align schools vertically, from elementary to high school.

For school staff, an Alliance Schools principals' network meets once a month. Through these meetings, principals developed a program of "parent academies"; these serve parents across a group of Alliance Schools and provide them with the information they need to be full participants in leadership and school decision-making. Alliance Schools Curriculum Specialists also meet regularly. Teachers from across Alliance Schools participate in an annual in-service day designed and run by Austin Interfaith organizers and leaders. These various forms of networking provide opportunities for parents, teachers, principals, and students to learn from each other and to support each other in their work.

AUSTIN INTERFAITH HAS MADE BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING THE ALLIANCE SCHOOLS NETWORK AN INTEGRAL PART OF ITS WORK.

Austin Interfaith has made building and strengthening the Alliance Schools network an integral part of its work, even though it is quite labor intensive. The Alliance Schools are institutional members of Austin Interfaith. A plurality of the school staff must agree in order for a school to become an Alliance school. The membership dues for schools are fixed at $750 per year. Austin Interfaith does not accept District funds for these dues, thus requiring a strong commitment from parents who must raise the institutional membership dues. Principals and teachers are participants in the same way as congregation and community members in Austin Interfaith's activities. At an action, both Alliance School teachers and congregation members plan the program, speak about issues, and make demands of candidates and officials. Schools as well as congregations commit themselves to turning out members for these actions. Austin Interfaith considers principals and teachers to be emerging leaders, as are members of other institutional affiliates. For Austin Interfaith, school issues deserve attention because they are relevant to its work in strengthening families and communities.

The Austin Independent School District's high regard for the Alliance Schools and their capacity for reform is another way in which Austin Interfaith's education organizing stands out. The new superintendent and others believe that key strengths of Alliance Schools are their depth of community and parent engagement and their having a sense of direction. As the superintendent asserted, "[An Alliance school] knows what it is about and where it is going." He is interested in seeing how the Alliance Schools would take up new initiatives that are part of his reform agenda, particularly the new Institute for Learning pilot, a teaching and learning model based on making expectations for students clear. The superintendent sees the work of Austin Interfaith as complementary to the Institute for Learning's ideas, and he has engineered meetings and joint planning between Austin Interfaith and the Institute. The District also appreciates Austin Interfaith's contribution to bringing additional resources to low-income district schools, an obligation which the district acknowledges it has yet to carry out fully. Finally, the District recognizes that the Alliance Schools represent a broad constituency and has been responsive when the organization brings issues to its attention.

A third way in which Austin Interfaith's education reform work stands out is the degree to which it has "grown" school and community leadership to sustain the initiative. Alliance Schools principals and teachers see themselves as leaders and organizers, with an obligation to identify and develop new leaders who understand Alliance Schools principles and can motivate staff and community members to participate. In Austin, the first Alliance principal was the progenitor of at least five other Alliance Schools principals and administrators and a host of teachers socialized in the Alliance Schools culture. The strength of leadership among Alliance Schools and congregational members has contributed to Austin Interfaith's ability, with just three staff members, to build a significant con stituency for public education in Austin. Austin Interfaith aims toward increasing the number of schools in the network and ultimately changing the "culture" of the district as a whole.

Indicators and Measures

Austin Interfaith and the Southwest IAF Network are active in every indicator area in the framework. For example, securing state funding to support the Alliance Schools model demonstrates and builds on the organization's power. Certainly Austin Interfaith's education organizing achieves greater equity by securing resources for schools with greater needs

and providing access to high-quality programs and challenging coursework. Austin Interfaith develops social capital as organizers and leaders build relationships within and across groups, as well as through the network of institutions, churches, and schools embedded in neighborhoods.

This report, however, focuses on Austin Interfaith's work using four of the eight indicator areas: leadership development, high quality curriculum and instruction, public accountability, and school/community connection. These areas emerged as particularly salient in both the interviews we conducted and the events we observed during site visits. Archival documentation, including reports and newspaper clippings, also point to these areas of Austin Interfaith's accomplishment. Much of the work that underpins the development of an Alliance Schools network in Austin preceded what we document here. The examples we use of Austin Interfaith's work reflect the current stage of the organizing effort, which focuses on expanding the number of Alliance Schools, deepening their impact at the local school level, and extending their influence throughout the District.

This report begins with Austin Interfaith's accomplishments in developing leadership. As Austin Interfaith develops school and community stakeholders as leaders, they, in turn, identify others as potential leaders and build their awareness of power relations and skills as citizens. This process contributes to the sustainability and growth of the Alliance Schools, and builds power to secure resources and improvement for the school and community. It has also led to the personal transformation of leaders. Second, we consider accomplishments in the area of improving instruction and curriculum. We identify how Alliance Schools have raised expectations for students, opened access to magnet programs, made curriculum more sensitive and relevant to minority and non-English speaking students, furthered professional development for teachers, and piloted new teaching initiatives for the District.

In the area of public accountability, we discuss accomplishments including shared accountability for student achievement, a commitment to open communication among school staff and between school staff and parents, public officials' responsiveness to Alliance Schools' and the community's agenda, and increased political and civic participation. Finally, we look at the accomplishments of the Alliance Schools in connecting the school and the community. Through the Alliance Schools work, schools are becoming resources for the community, teachers are also seeing parents and the community as resources, schools are becoming more welcoming to parents/community, and parents/community members are taking on new substantive roles in schools.

First Indicator Area: Leadership Development

"[I define my role as] a leader. I had never considered myself a leader before. ...Now I work as a parent liaison. This is what I want to do. Teach parents that they are leaders, that they have a right to ask questions, get the information. I see myself in every one of those parents." SCHOOL-BASED PARENT LIAISON WHO HAD BEEN A PARENT LEADER AT ZAVALA

In the IAF/Austin Interfaith model of what it means to be an Alliance School, the principal and teachers, as well as parents and community members, become leaders whose responsibility it is to identify and develop leadership in others. Developing leaders means building their capacity to take the lead in making demands, negotiating, and carrying out school improvement efforts. One strategy is to educate parents about curriculum, school policy, budgets, and the political context and provide opportunities for them to take on active roles using that information. Leadership development entails a strategic assessment of the potential of parents, congregants, and teachers as leaders, along with sensitivity to their motivations and how they analyze situations.

Not everyone plays the same kind of leadership role in Austin Interfaith's work or in the context of a school. IAF/Austin Interfaith categorize leadership roles as primary, secondary, or tertiary. Primary leaders have the broadest overview of Austin Interfaith's work and a strategic understanding of building a powerful organization. They are the ones who guide strategy and have the capacity to develop others as leaders. Secondary leaders are those who take responsibility for particular campaigns, meet with public officials, and often are on the front lines. Tertiary leaders are most important to move an issue forward.

They commit to getting turnout for an action or rally and always serve on the front lines. All three types of leaders are important in a campaign or action and individuals may move back and forth between the different kinds of leadership roles.

There are four ways in which Austin Interfaith's accomplishments in leadership development can be measured. First is the *growth in the number of schools in the network and deepening of the work in those schools.* Second is the *sustainability of the IAF vision in Alliance Schools.* A third is *bringing attention, resources, and improvements to the schools* and the community. Finally, Austin Interfaith's work in leadership development can be measured in terms of the *personal growth and transformation of leaders.*

Increasing the Size of the Alliance Schools Network and the Strength of Alliance Schools Culture

As increasing numbers of parents, teachers, and administrators become leaders and move across schools, they bring their enthusiasm and understanding to new settings, increasing the size of the network and deepening the commitment of schools to Alliance principles. During the period of our research, three new schools came into the network and two more were considering joining. There is a growing recognition of the need to move Alliance Schools membership up the grade levels, in response to parents' concerns about the quality of their children's education after elementary school.

Ridgetop Elementary School and T.A. Brown Elementary are good examples of how "growing" leadership extends the reach of the Alliance Schools in Austin. The principals of both schools had been teachers at Zavala when its principal first began working with Austin Interfaith. Both moved into principalships at schools that were not already in the Alliance network, but they soon brought their schools in. The two principals explained their motivations for bringing their schools into the Alliance Schools network in similar ways. Soon after taking their new positions, they realized the importance of the kind of community engagement there was at Zavala. *"I realized that the school could not do it alone."*

The T.A. Brown principal was excited to inherit a "Blue Ribbon School," but she soon learned that the honor was a shallow one. *"T.A. Brown was known as a welcoming school, but parents did not know what a blue ribbon school was. The work had been done by the principal and a few teachers."* She valued the inclusive culture of an Alliance school, noting that having parents and community members involved keeps her in touch with broader concerns. *"If they weren't involved, I would get lost in the day to day issues."* Both Ridgetop and T.A. Brown are models of what can happen when the principal understands deeply and is strongly committed to the collaborative and inclusive culture of an Alliance School. Both principals have invested in extensive parent and teacher training, carried out and encouraged public conversation, and shaped a staff strongly committed to authentic community engagement.

When the principal who was at Zavala went on to the principalship of a middle school, he continued to push forward promising leaders. The current principal of Brooke School, which became an Alliance School after she came, remembered her own mentoring at Webb Middle School.

"I loved being a curriculum specialist, working with teachers and students. And one day he (the former Zavala principal) [brought up] the Brooke interview and said, 'I think you need to go do that.' I said, "No, I'm happy here," but he said, 'Fly little bird, fly.' He sent me out there and here I am. He is my mentor and he mentors a lot of principals. He raised us in that collaborative culture and we know that it works. And my job here is to find other people who will be leaders and help them grow to be twice as many Alliance Schools, and that culture becomes not just a school culture but a community culture and eventually an AISD [Austin Independent School District] culture. And I think that the Alliance Schools are changing the culture of AISD."

Sustainability of the IAF Vision in Alliance Schools

A range of those we interviewed emphasized the role of leadership in the sustainability of the Alliance Schools vision. Joining the Alliance Schools network is only the first step in an ongoing process of change and reflection for schools. The intensity of commitment to the Alliance vision fluctuates over time at any site. The IAF refrain, "all organizing is reorganizing" effectively describes the ongoing nature of the task, and the hard work and persistence that it takes to change a school's culture and to sustain the new culture. School staff and parents are continually learning how best to realize the Alliance Schools principles in their school. Both time and turnover of staff and parent leaders affect the intensity of commitment. Innovations and relationships become routine and require renewal or overhaul. The depth of leadership and its spread across Alliance Schools and in member congregations has provided a strong base for the ongoing process of "reorganizing."

While there are several possible entry points for a school to become involved as an Alliance School, principal leadership is key. The principal must be open to working collaboratively and to being a model for his/her staff and community. At the same time, organizers and principals alike recognize the danger of relying on a particular individual to sustain a reform effort. With this in mind, during one-on-ones, house meetings, and neighborhood walks, principals look for potential leaders among teachers and parents and cultivate them in various ways. They send teacher leaders to IAF training and position them on school leadership teams, persuade promising teacher leaders to move into administrative positions in other schools, as in the examples above, and encourage parent leaders to take positions as parent liaisons or after-school program coordinators.

Zavala provides evidence of how leadership development sustains the reform effort. As the first Alliance school in Austin, community engagement varied in intensity over time, and teachers recognized that the "relational culture" that made the professional environment of Zavala so satisfying was vulnerable if taken for granted. A core group of teachers recognized the importance of the principal in maintaining the culture, and worked to participate in principal appointments and to assure that new principals would become socialized in the Zavala/Alliance Schools environment.

The Zavala teachers were mostly successful in getting their preferred candidates until one recent appointment. The young principal assigned to Zavala in 1999 had never been in an Alliance school, but the faculty was determined to "socialize" her. As a long-term teacher at Zavala told us, "We talked as a faculty and said, if she doesn't live up to the Zavala tradition, we'll give her one year." In this case, the teachers took it on themselves to nurture the new principal in the ways of leadership in an Alliance School. In December 2000, after she had been at Zavala for about a year, the new principal was already participating in parent academy training and Austin Interfaith organizers saw her as a promising leader. When we visited in spring 2000, she was strategizing about how to get new parents involved at Zavala.

"ALL ORGANIZING IS REORGANIZING" DESCRIBES THE NATURE OF OUR TASK.

Bringing Attention and Resources to Schools

Parents, school staff, and community members gain political "literacy" as they engage in public actions and "get out the vote" campaigns, write bond issues and legislation, make demands of elected officials, and participate in training. As a result, they have been leaders in winning resources and policy changes that benefit their schools. The Investment Capital Fund makes funds available to any school in Texas that commits to engaging parents with school staff in learning and innovation. The amount available has increased incrementally from an original $2 million in 1993 to $14 million in 1999. The goal for 2001 was $20 million. With the growth of the Fund, there has been an increase in the amount of money any one school can obtain. In addition, Austin Interfaith and Alliance Schools leaders have brought pressure on City Council and the School District to commit millions of dollars for playground renovation and after-school programs in schools and in neighborhoods that otherwise would have been passed by.

Most of the schools we visited had recruited a strong parent leader to assume the role of "parent liaison," a position funded through "Account for Learning" funds (a program to compensate low-income schools after busing ended). In many places in Austin, the parent liaison acts as a social worker, calling parents when their children are absent from school or finding social services for children in need. In Alliance Schools, the liaisons see their role as developing leaders, raising community awareness of the political environment, and encouraging parents to participate in actions/accountability sessions, vote, and get others to vote. School staff recognize that having strong community leaders creates the political will for reform—community support that allows schools to take on issues they would not be able to address by themselves. In this way, Alliance Schools parents increase the power of schools and school administrators. As one parent liaison told us, "Life is political; you have to learn how to work the system." Another explained his role as,

"getting the parents more involved in the political scene. Because indirectly, it is them and how much resources they are going to get for the school if they are out there voting and the candidates they support that are getting elected. That is one thing that has happened to me since I've been involved in Austin Interfaith, that I've become much more aware politically and about the balance of power in Austin."

Personal Growth of Leaders and Their Increased Sense of Efficacy

Developing leadership is a pervasive theme in the way in which participants in Alliance Schools talk about their work. Parents speak of developing other parents as leaders, and they also then become role models for other parents and for their own children. We heard several stories of how children become more engaged in school and even take on leadership roles among youth in their congregations because they are inspired when they see their parents in the schools and in leadership positions. When Alliance Schools participants talk about becoming leaders, they tell stories about their personal development and learning, how they gained confidence and courage, increased their political awareness, and recognized their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Their stories are about the opportunities they had to test themselves as leaders, usually a tale of being pushed forward, with support, to speak in front of a group, lobby a public official, or take a position of responsibility. The Brooke Principal's story of being told, "Fly little bird" is one example of personal transformation. Several parents and teachers told us about their growing sense of personal power and ability to bring about change as a result of the roles they have played as Austin Interfaith and Alliance Schools leaders. Parents and community members also gain knowledge—about curriculum and pedagogy, how schools and the School District are organized, and about the political arena—that increases their confidence, capacity, and credibility as they work to improve schools.

Profile of T.A. Vasquez, Former Zavala Parent and Austin Interfaith Leader

"I think it's been nine years now that...I was the parent of four kids at Zavala. And my involvement in the schools at that time was coming to some PTA meetings...parent conferences, helping whenever I got the chance...but not really [feeling] like I had any business knowing anything else about the schools or... knowing about the teachers personally. And if at any point I ever disagreed with the teacher, I kept it to myself. I didn't feel it was my place because [they] were teachers, and they've had more schooling than me. ...I felt that everything was fine.

"One day, I had someone call me up and introduce herself...and she said, 'I'm an organizer with Austin Interfaith.' At that time, I had no idea who Austin Interfaith was, I had never had an affiliation with any kind of organization other than the PTA. ...I asked her, 'Where did you get my name?'...and she said, 'Well, we're looking at working with your school. And we spoke to the principal, spoke to the teachers, and they mentioned your name. They said that you come and visit, and they see that you are interested and work with your kids.'" The organizer asked her questions about herself, how she saw the school and the community. *"And to myself I'm thinking, 'Man, these are questions no one has ever asked me before.' I never had any one ask me questions about how I felt or how I saw things. She really wanted to know how I felt.'"*

Eventually, Ms. Vasquez came to a house meeting, with several other parents. *"And I'm making my comments and hearing other people making their comments and I thought, 'Wow, I didn't know anybody else felt the way I did.' When I'm by myself, I'm thinking I really can't do anything about it, but then slowly realized, 'I'm not the only one thinking this way. There are other people. There is a chance or a hope that something could be different.'*

"One night at a PTA meeting...one of the parents read out the TAAS scores. I didn't even know what TAAS scores were. I didn't know how significant the scores were. [The test scores showed] *we were really in bad shape, even though my kids are getting A's and B's. So I am thinking, 'There is something wrong with this picture.'... My focus was really small; it was like I had blinders on. I had just concentrated on my own kids...but eventually it came to the point where I started questioning the school itself and the teachers. I started thinking, 'Okay, why is my daughter going to middle school, and she is not being recommended to be in honors classes?'*

"I was kind of scared, because I had ...always been this person kind of looking through the window, kind of wanting to be a part of this kind of thing, but scared because...I haven't gotten my degree. I don't want to show how scared I am." Ms. Vasquez tells about the painstaking process of gaining the knowledge and confidence to confront those in power. She was one of the parents who participated directly in the battle to get a health clinic at Zavala, and in this role organized other parents and sat at the table with city officials. In preparation, Austin Interfaith organizers helped her interpret data and articulate demands.

I DIDN'T KNOW ANYBODY ELSE FELT THE WAY I DID. ...THERE ARE OTHER PEOPLE.
THERE IS A CHANCE OR A HOPE THAT SOMETHING COULD BE DIFFERENT.

"And they'd come over to my house. ...'We're going to go over some numbers'...and we'd be sitting there, sometimes till 11:30 at night going over stuff, working to understand what's going on. This is what this chart means. This is important. Working to put together what I wanted to say in words. ...[The Austin Interfaith organizer] *was very patient with me and helped me to organize my thoughts into words that would really make a good impression. ...And at that time I was real self-conscious... because in meetings with school board members and state legislators... they are dressed to the teeth. And for me to feel like I'm capable of sitting at the same table with them and discuss what's going on here? But it was like, what made me feel like I could do that? I have found an organization that makes me feel important, that looks at me like a person.*

Noting that others had seen leadership potential in her, she said, *"I guess maybe it was in there all the time. ...And, you know, I was scared. Nobody was really there to push me or encourage me."* Ms. Vasquez eventually became director of Zavala's after-school program and served as its community liaison. When we interviewed her, she was just starting as community liaison at Johnson High School.

"I've been part of this organization for nine years. I still learn something new every day. I guess what keeps me going is being a part of this [community organizing], *seeing how it works. ...And every time I'm part of these groups, I'm giving real pieces of what I know. ...These people that come to these tables are all executives, they have knowledge. ...But I say, 'Where's the community?' And I always bring a piece of the Zavala story with me. 'You know, if you really want to make change, you really have to get with the people.' And I'll tell them, 'let's do some house meetings.' And I actually go to a house meeting with them. ...The organization* [Austin Interfaith], *they take me to school. I don't have a degree, but I've been going to school all this time. I've learned new approaches to curriculum. ...I've met wonderful people with a wealth of knowledge, and here I am... this little person from East Austin. How many people have the opportunities to learn from these people that ordinarily you have to go to college to be near? I wouldn't have. I even got to go to Harvard* [to speak and participate in a seminar]. *So the organization has shared and given me a lot."* RESEARCH FOR ACTION INTERVIEW

Second Indicator: High Quality Curriculum and Instruction

A school culture that encourages "conversation" creates the conditions for high quality curriculum and instruction by encouraging reflection on classroom practice, clarifying and raising both teacher and parent expectations for student learning, and drawing attention to the quality and appropriateness of curriculum. Several Alliance Schools accomplishments provide evidence of success in this area, including: *raised expectations for student learning, policies and curriculum that are more sensitive to and appropriate for minority and non-English speaking students, increased opportunities for professional development, and introduction of new teaching initiatives to meet students' needs.*

Raised Expectations for Student Learning

When parents and community members participate in the conversation about schools and children's experiences, they have a clearer picture of what is happening in the classroom and what their children's grades really mean. As a result, they are more likely to hold schools accountable for enabling their children to compete with the strongest students from the best schools in the system. Dennis Shirley's detailed case study of Zavala in *Community Organizing for School Reform* describes how increased collaboration between parents and teachers led to school staff holding higher expectations for children's achievement. *"Parental interest led the teachers to re-examine their instructional styles and curricula and to develop new attitudes and techniques to teach their students better.* '[As one teacher remarked], *we've gotten away from the stereotypical idea of minority children which*

led many of us to water down the curriculum.'"[4] He provides several examples of how parents' and community members' increased interest, as well as dialogue between school staff and parents, led to changes in curriculum and classroom practices. The results of these efforts can be seen in rising test scores, increased parent satisfaction, higher attendance rates, and lower teacher turnover.

One strategy that illustrates both the nature of the effort to raise expectations and the kinds of results that can accrue for children and communities is The Young Scientists Program, developed as a result of Zavala's efforts to raise expectations and achievement levels for all of its students and, at the same time, to increase access to magnet and honors programs at the middle and high school levels.

One concern of Zavala parents that always surfaced was how few of their children were accepted to the prestigious science magnet program at Kealing Middle School, only a few blocks away. Before The Young Scientists Program, only one Zavala student had ever been admitted to Kealing's program. When the Zavala principal learned about a National Science Foundation-supported research project at the University of Texas that required a community outreach component, he saw the potential for developing a program that would prepare Zavala students to compete for entrance to Kealing's magnet program. The collaboration between the University and members of the Zavala school community led to The Young Scientists Program, which adds a sixth grade that accepts students on a competitive basis. To supplement the NSF funds, Zavala parents put pressure on the District for additional support, and Alliance Schools leaders since have obtained support to replicate the program in three additional schools.

It should be noted that Young Scientists was one of several efforts that teachers and parents at Zavala implemented, motivated by their belief that it was necessary to raise expectations for students. Zavala teachers realized that they were not challenging students enough, were not using the kind of curriculum they would have used use for middle class students in other schools. They raised their expectations, used different curriculum and teaching practices, and test scores went up. Teachers continued to monitor progress over time; The Young Scientists Program contributed to teachers' extended process of reflection on the success of their efforts to raise student achievement.

The Young Scientists Program has been replicated in three other Alliance Schools. It has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of students admitted to Kealing's magnet program from the schools that have adopted it. Since the program began in the early 1990s, the proportion of students from Eastside schools who go on to Kealing has increased from one in ten to one in four, and this has changed the demographic composition of the magnet program significantly.

A potential critique of The Young Scientists Program is that it supports tracking. Austin Interfaith and Alliance Schools, however, point to the benefits for the broader student population. The parents who worked to develop and win resources to bring Young Scientists to their schools are working not just for their own children, but also setting a precedent for changes to ensure that more of Austin's low-income children have a chance to get into honors and magnet programs and have greater opportunity for social mobility. In addition, both teachers and parents point to the ways in which having a competitive sixth grade program at their schools raises the quality of instruction and curricular challenge at the lower grades. All of the teachers in the school have a strong incentive to challenge their students academically in order to position them to qualify for The Young Scientists Program.

Though there are likely a number of contributing factors in addition to The Young Scientists Program, standardized test scores at Alliance Schools have gone up since the early 1990s. In the most recent report of the results of the TAAS, Zavala achieved the status of "recognized," one notch below the highest rating of exemplary. The percentage of students scoring at high levels at other Alliance Schools has also gone up, with Brooke and Maplewood among the twenty-four schools that achieved "recognized" status in the 2001 report.

Policies and Curriculum That Are More Sensitive to and Appropriate for Minority and Non-English Speaking Students

Working toward effective bilingual policies and programs for the Austin public schools has been one focus of Austin Interfaith's education organizing at both the individual school and citywide levels. Despite the fact that 47 percent of the students in the Austin

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4. Shirley, 1997, p. 160.

Independent School District are Hispanic and the number of Asian students is growing, the district has lacked a consistent policy on bilingual education. In addition, schools with high percentages of Spanish-speaking students lacked books and materials in Spanish and sufficient qualified bilingual teachers.

Austin Interfaith efforts in the last few years grew out of a concern about bilingual education at one particular Alliance school. The principal and teachers at T.A. Brown Elementary were frustrated by District reluctance to assign students to bilingual classes. More than half of T.A. Brown's students (56 percent) speak only Spanish, yet the school did not receive the staff and materials necessary to provide an appropriate program. The principal encouraged teachers to hold a series of meetings with parents to alert them to this dilemma. The parents were surprised to learn that their children were not receiving needed instruction and shared the teachers' anger. Together they identified a set of demands, carried out research about the status of bilingual education in the District, and held house meetings to build a broader constituency. In the process, parents and teachers defined their vision for bilingual education at their school.

Realizing that they could only achieve their school's goals for bilingual education by changing policy at the District level, T.A. Brown staff and parents expanded their effort into a district-wide campaign. They held a series of open forums that included other Alliance Schools with similar populations, which directed public attention toward the issue of bilingual education. As a result of their efforts, the District's Deputy Superintendent for Bilingual Education agreed to meet with them and even visited T.A. Brown. After a series of meetings in which parents presented their research, the Deputy Superintendent immediately bypassed red tape that limited book purchases, and in fall 2000 laid out a vision for bilingual education that reflected his discussions with the parents and teachers.

Evidence of the success of this campaign includes the purchase of bilingual materials and the institution of a bilingual education policy that addresses community concerns. In a public accountability session in spring 2000, School Board candidates publicly committed to working with Austin Interfaith to carry out the District's new bilingual education policies. Extensive newspaper coverage the next day brought wider attention to Austin Interfaith's bilingual education agenda and to the candidates' promises, contributing to public accountability. Future measures of impact will be the addition of bilingual teachers and appropriate materials in all Austin schools with significant non-English speaking populations.

Increased Professional Development for Teachers

For the past three years, the Alliance Schools have designed and led their own in-service program on the day that the District sets aside for district-wide in-service. The Alliance program is planned and led by Austin Interfaith organizers and the staff and parent leaders from Austin's Alliance Schools. Inclusion of the Alliance Schools program among the choices open to teachers is evidence that the District recognizes the high quality of teaching and organizational practice in Alliance Schools. Since school staff members have the opportunity to choose particular sessions on the in-service day, the level of attendance at the Alliance Schools program is one measure of teachers' views on the quality of the program, as well as the strength and reach of the initiative. Attendance has been consistently high; there were an estimated 800-900 teachers at the first in-service day, and in January 2001 there were over 1,000 teachers and staff members attending the Alliance Schools program.

In addition to these in-service programs, schools can support training through the Investment Capital Fund from the Texas Education Agency. Participants in Alliance Schools often attend training that involves parents and teachers together. Some examples of such joint training include: Southwest Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) five-day or ten-day conferences; training related to new curriculum; and collaborative sessions at the school level to develop or improve programs. Overall, these discussions encourage teachers and parents to reflect on the school setting from a variety of perspectives and see things in new ways. It is not uncommon to hear teachers and parents talk about their experiences in these training opportunities as transformative. The Southwest IAF often brings in distinguished education researchers and social scientists to talk about their work and its implications for Alliance Schools. It is not unusual for organizers and parents to refer to the ideas of a scholar whose work they have read or discussed with the author.

Introduction of New Teaching Initiatives to Meet Students' Needs: the Institute for Learning

In his first year, Austin's current superintendent introduced an experimental pilot program, University of Pittsburgh Professor Lauren Resnick's Institute for Learning (IFL), as a strategy for improving students' academic performance. This approach, a "teaching and learning model," stresses the importance of teachers being absolutely clear about their expectations for students' achievement. The IFL refers to the kind of conversation that would occur between teachers and students in an ideal classroom as "accountable talk." A public demonstration of Institute for Learning practice is known as a "learning walk," in which standards and work are made visible and students have an opportunity to explain what they learned and how.

For several reasons, Austin Interfaith and the Alliance Schools have been in the forefront of implementing IFL in the Austin Independent School District. For one thing, Austin Interfaith recognizes that it shares many of IFL's values, including the importance of maintaining public accountability and developing a school culture characterized by openness about expectations and teaching practices. In addition, the Austin superintendent has confidence in the capacity of Alliance Schools to implement a sophisticated teaching and learning innovation like IFL. The superintendent's eventual goal is to implement the IFL approach district-wide, and he wants to build some support for the program within the district first, so that school staff members won't reject it as, in his words, the "reform du jour." In his view, Alliance Schools offer a good place to start because of their collaborative school culture and community engagement, and he hopes to learn from the pilot implementation there.

The superintendent characterizes his current relationship with Austin Interfaith as a "courtship," and that metaphor might extend to his role as a matchmaker between the Institute for Learning and Austin Interfaith/Alliance Schools. IAF and Austin Interfaith are interested in the Institute's approach to classroom practice not only because they see compatibility with their values, but also because they see IFL as having the potential to stimulate thinking about how the IAF vision for Alliance Schools can penetrate the culture of the classroom itself. This exploration is in process; Alliance Schools' teachers and parents have attended training and visited the Pittsburgh headquarters of the Institute for Learning. The superintendent sees IAF/Alliance School's capacity for engaging parents as bringing an element missing from the Institute for Learning model. It will be important to track how the marriage of these two organizations transforms each and contributes to student learning.

Third Indicator Area: Public Accountability

"You have to be relational, it is hard to really understand... We're not used to thinking of ourselves...as stakeholders of the school in the community. This is not a concept...there's not a word in our vocabulary. That you have the right to hold teachers or those in office accountable." ALLIANCE SCHOOLS PARENT

Austin Interfaith organizers and leaders stress the public nature of the relationships involved in collaboration at all levels in Alliance Schools. In a public relationship, parties make a commitment both to support each other and to hold each other accountable for follow-through. Public relationships broaden accountability, and make it collective. The most experienced leaders think of themselves as accountable for the well-being of the larger community. Measures of public accountability in Austin Interfaith's work include: *open communication between parents and teachers* about their struggles and expectations; a commitment to *open communication by school staff*, both among themselves and with students; *support of public officials for the Alliance Schools Initiative* and responsiveness to a parent and community agenda; and *increased political and civic participation.*

Open Communication Between Parents and Teachers About Their Struggles and Expectations

Through the processes of organizing and becoming an Alliance School, both parents and teachers make public their expectations and the struggle to reach them. The story of Zavala reveals the transformative effect of disclosing expectations in a public conversation. Parents looked much more deeply into the educational business of Zavala and became much more engaged, while teachers confronted their own inconsistencies and low expectations for the children. Significant advances like the development of the Young Scientists Program and generally improved curriculum and teaching at all grade levels only came about as a result of parents' asking questions and teachers revealing their dilemmas about their classroom practices and methods of assessing students' achievement. It took the joint effort of parents and school staff to come up with both the pedagogical ideas and the power to obtain resources and waivers necessary to implement a program like Young Scientists.

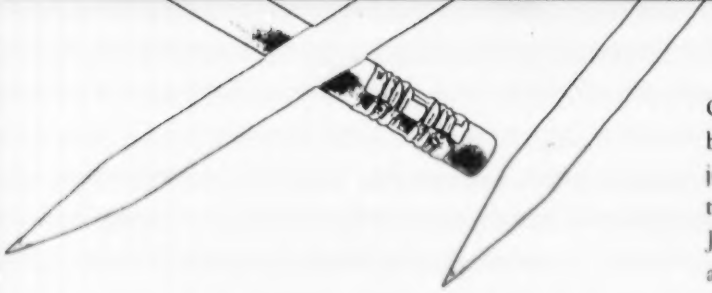
The bilingual education campaign at T.A. Brown is another example of how teachers and parents have come together when expectations and struggles were discussed publicly. In this case, teachers brought parents information about the inadequacy of services for non-English speaking students, which spurred parents to join them in further research and action. These steps made it possible to bring the conversation to the District level, which enabled a resolution that had wide impact. It was the strength of teachers and parents working jointly that led the District to review its policies and clear bureaucratic obstacles to hiring new bilingual teachers and purchasing appropriate materials. In this case, parents' and community members' awareness and the joint effort with school staff created the political will for action.

We heard many examples of parents and teachers talking about and clarifying expectations. At Sunset Valley, parents told us about their efforts to clarify for themselves what they can expect of teachers and of their children's work. Several Alliance Schools instituted Math and Literacy Nights and encouraged parents to attend. At Brooke, for example, more than 150 parents showed up for each night. The principal of Ridgetop Elementary School told us, "I want parents to hold me (and other principals) responsible and ask me how do I measure their child's success?" She has modeled this to her staff, and the everyday life of the school offers several examples of public accountability. For one thing, teachers use elements of the organizing process in their interactions with parents. One teacher told us that she met with parents first one-on-one and eventually as a group, in order to learn about their expectations of her. In turn, she shared her expectations in asking them to be learning coaches for their children.

A Commitment to Open Communication by School Staff

Public accountability is implicit in the "relational culture" that Alliance Schools strive for. In the everyday life of a school, public accountability shows when professional staff have open communication with each other as well as with parents and community members. This openness is in direct contrast with the typical school culture. So little communication exists among teachers in most public schools that researchers have used terms like "privatization of practice" and the "egg crate model" to characterize the professional environment. In keeping with the principle of public accountability, the goals of teachers within Alliance Schools and principals across schools is to share information honestly about their own settings.

The Ridgetop principal described changes at her school that convinced her teachers were becoming more open about their classroom practice, seeking and offering support.



"Kindergarten teachers were talking to the first grade teachers and asking what they could do to help each other. Before that there was competition between them, competition between principals for test scores, all for test scores. Now people are getting the message that they have to help each other out so they can all do well."

The Ridgetop principal's strategy for hiring teachers is another example of how the expectation of public accountability within the school's professional staff is made visible. She told us that when she makes an offer to a new teacher, she always invites a staff member to be with her in the office and asks the candidate, "Are you willing to do the work? Because we will all hold you accountable. If you say, right now, on speakerphone, 'I accept your offer, and I'm willing to do the work,' I'll say, "We will hold you accountable because we don't want you to just say it because you want a job."

This kind of openness and public accountability among the professional staff of schools is what makes the Institute for Learning's work such a comfortable fit with the Alliance Schools culture. The "learning walk" parallels the Alliance Schools' neighborhood walk; both build public accountability and establish a relational culture. In our visit to a school which was piloting the IFL approach, we went on a "learning walk" in which we observed work hanging on the wall outside each classroom. Teachers invited students to come out of the classroom to explain and assess their work in light of their interpretation of the expectations. Inside the classrooms, students directed visitors' attention to the poster paper above each workstation where the expectations, which the students had memorized, were written out in clear block letters. The learning walk exposes what is usually private to public consideration and thereby to finding common understanding and solutions to problems.

Overall, the creation of a "relational culture," which builds public accountability, has the effect of creating joint ownership for student and school success among teachers and between the school and its community. Joint ownership makes use of the full range of available talent and ingenuity in working towards student success, and makes it possible to sustain reform efforts. By opening up classroom practice, the relational culture of Alliance Schools sets the stage for improvements in teaching and learning.

As noted earlier, there are multiple networks associated with Alliance Schools—networks of principals, curriculum specialists, parent leaders, networks across school levels, groups of students in alumni clubs, and participants in conferences across Alliance Schools. These networks provide broad-based support for raising issues and solving problems that Alliance Schools have in common but that an individual school cannot take on itself. The networks also include connections with congregations in Austin, mostly in the same neighborhood as the school, but not always. Often school improvement efforts originate from the concerns of congregations, which are rooted in their communities and see schools as a linchpin for community improvement.

Public Officials Support the Alliance Schools Initiative and Respond to Parent and Community Agenda

Through the processes of house meetings, carrying out research, meetings with public officials, and holding public accountability sessions or forums, Alliance Schools broaden their conversation to include public officials among the stakeholders entering into accountable relationships concerning public schools. We saw evidence that Austin Interfaith and the Alliance Schools were able to get city and school officials to follow through on their responsibilities. The Southwest IAF, with participation from Austin Interfaith, has succeeded in maintaining and increasing the funds available from the Texas Education Agency for schools to engage parents in reform, even when there were threats to cut the funds or eliminate them altogether. In addition, the Austin City Council has allocated funds for and supported playground renovation and after-school programs.

Austin Interfaith and Alliance Schools have also been successful in getting the District to acknowledge needs and follow through on many of its commitments

regarding bilingual education. The District still must hire more bilingual teachers, a commitment Austin Interfaith asked of School Board candidates in a spring 2000 accountability session. When parents at Zavala began to ask what the District was going to do to make up for construction mistakes at the school that cut needed space from new classrooms, the superintendent himself came to a meeting and promised to compensate with additional funding. These examples illustrate how Austin Interfaith has succeeded in holding public officials accountable for improving Austin's public schools.

Increased Political and Civic Participation

Strategies that result in public accountability necessarily serve to engage community members, parents, and school staff in the political arena, thereby building their skills in civic participation and raising their awareness of how to leverage power. During the late 1980s, organizing around school bond issues not only served as a civics lesson but also served to energize Austin Interfaith members for the long-term work of increasing educational equity and improving school programs. They successfully organized the vote against a proposed school bond that would have directed funds primarily to schools that were already well resourced. Two years later, when the School Board presented a new bond issue that directed more school construction funds to low-income schools, Austin Interfaith members worked for passage and the bond passed. As one Austin Interfaith leader told us, *"That was a turning point. They* [members] *realized that this organization could get something done."*

Engagement with public officials at the state, city, and school district levels is a central strategy in many of Austin Interfaith and Alliance Schools campaigns to address pressing issues. Austin Interfaith invites officials to accountability sessions in which they are asked to declare publicly their positions on a set of Austin Interfaith's demands. Each public accountability session is preceded by a meeting with each official where leaders present the agenda in advance. This gives public officials a chance to discuss different perspectives and develop their positions through dialogue.

The power of the vote is an underlying theme of accountability sessions. Community power derives from public officials' recognition that Austin Interfaith members will exert their voting power if necessary to hold them accountable for commitments made in public. At the time of the session we observed in the spring of 2000, Austin Interfaith was planning a "get-out-the-vote" campaign for a day that the city had designated specifically for the organization's members to vote for public candidates. A large voter turnout would demonstrate to the public officials that indeed Austin Interfaith had the political clout to impact a candidate's chance of election and to hold elected officials to their commitments over the long haul. These strategies for creating accountable relationships with elected officials and high-ranking school district administrators educate community members in how the political system can work for them, and stimulate their civic participation. A public relationship with elected and school district officials entails holding them accountable and brings with it a necessary measure of tension.

Fourth Indicator Area: School/Community Connection

The discussion of public accountability above outlines the complexity of relationships established through community organizing. These relationships include openness and trust, but they also entail holding parties accountable through the underlying recognition that each has power by virtue either of position or ability to speak for large numbers. One of the best known images of community organizing is large turnout at public actions, leading many to see community organizing groups as confrontational. In actuality, relationships between schools and community organizing groups are usually more nuanced and represent varying forms of school/community connection.

In the case of Austin Interfaith, the relationship between school and community is especially close by virtue of the relationship of the schools to Austin Interfaith itself. Alliance Schools become institutional members of Austin Interfaith, with the result that teachers, parents, administrators, and community members are potential Austin Interfaith leaders. This means that teachers or administrators, as well as parents and community members, may initiate efforts to strengthen community engagement or gain support for a school improvement effort. The Austin superintendent and other external partners clearly recognize this strong community engagement as a distinctive feature of Alliance Schools and acknowledge that Austin Interfaith has much to teach others about how to bring about such engagement.

Some of the measures of Alliance Schools' success in weaving school and community together include: *schools become resources to the community; teachers see parents and the community as resources; parents see schools as welcoming and open to their input;* and *parents take on meaningful new roles in schools.*

Schools Become Resources to the Community

"Schools are embedded in the work of Austin Interfaith and it has been good for the organization as well as good for the schools. Schools cannot be concerned with what happens just inside their buildings. Job training and ESL classes, these aren't traditional things for schools to get involved in, but it is a natural thing for them to get into." AUSTIN INTERFAITH ORGANIZER

As noted earlier in this report, Austin Interfaith's organizing work with its member congregations brought out concern about schools. Congregations that draw membership largely from their immediate neighborhoods are most likely to see schools as critical to the well-being of their communities. Much of the education organizing of Austin Interfaith, and indeed the Southwest IAF affiliates all over Texas, emerged from the partnerships between schools and congregations. These partnerships or links have continued, and fostering them is currently a deliberate strategy of Austin Interfaith.

As a result of this practice, schools become more open and welcoming to parents and community members and are more likely to share use of their facilities. Schools become part of the inventory of sites for classes serving thousands of adults in such Austin Interfaith initiatives as ESL and GED programs run in collaboration with the local community college and job training through the program Capital IDEA. As schools become more open to the community, they also become host sites for community meetings on issues such as zoning, traffic, combating drugs, or public housing.

Program enhancements also open up schools to uses outside of the regular school day and may bring in parents/community members. For example, the after-school programs involve parents as instructors and even coordinators. For some parents, involvement in an after-school program is their first opportunity to become engaged in the school.

Teachers See Parents and the Community as Resources

Through neighborhood walks, house meetings, and strong parent presence in the school, teachers gain greater awareness of the concerns and conditions of the local community, which makes them more sensitive to student needs, better able to work with parents to help students achieve, and allies in working for community improvements that will ultimately benefit

the educational environment. The process of organizing in itself brings parents and teachers into closer interaction and opens the eyes of both parties. Over and over again, we heard school staff members say that going on a neighborhood walk opened their eyes to community life. They told of becoming more receptive to a deeper engagement of parents and community members in school life, while they themselves became more engaged in the community.

For example, through regular house meetings, teachers at Walnut Creek engaged with parents in dealing with problems in the area around the school, including trash and people loitering as a result of drug dealing. One teacher told us,

"One big problem around the schools was the drugs and what went along with that. Teachers wouldn't have known about this problem, even though the kids and parents knew, because they were not in the area as much. They learned about it at meetings and got involved."

As a result of house meetings involving Brooke School parents and staff, joint staff-parent committees formed around areas of concern. One concern was children's safety at school dismissal time when there was heavy traffic in the area. Together, parents and teachers came up with a procedure that involved each teacher walking his/her class outside at the end of the day and making sure each child met a parent or caregiver. Although teachers initially were wary of this system, staff and parents grew to appreciate the opportunity to talk with each other and exchange information about the children and community life.

When teachers gain a better sense of the challenges that face both their students and the parents, they are more likely to take these into consideration in their work with students and in their expectations of parents. For example, Alliance Schools teachers told us that their increased understanding of the extent of students' responsibilities at home led them to reconsider the students' potential in the classroom and raise their expectations. In other cases, teachers told us about their increased familiarity with and respect for parents. They said that they were more likely to meet with parents, communicate their expectations for parents' roles and come to appreciate the diversity of roles parents can play. Before, teachers may have had a nagging sense that parents could do more, but they didn't know specifically what they could expect or have means to communicate their expectations. Through the extensive interactions between parents and teachers, teachers gained a better sense of what was reasonable to expect from parents and how best to communicate with them.

Most importantly, several experiences impressed school staff with the power of parents and community members to support them in gaining resources and directing the attention of school and elected officials to issues. Parents were instrumental in obtaining funding for after-school programs and playground renovations and in bringing a health clinic to Zavala. As this report illustrates, the schools have increasingly turned to parents for help in solving problems, advocating for policy changes, gaining resources, and so forth. For example, parents' voices, added to the school's own, influenced the superintendent to intervene in solving construction problems at Zavala, to come up with an improved bilingual education policy and funds for bilingual materials, and to add a Young Scientists program at several Alliance Schools.

Parents and Community Members See Schools as Welcoming and Open to Their Input

The "relational culture" of Alliance Schools opens them to parents and community members as full participants. As a result of such activities as neighborhood walks, after-school programs that include adult education, and house meetings in which school staff participate, parents feel more comfortable in schools and their presence is increased. (The schools we observed did vary in the degree to which parents were present and the nature of their participation.) Organizers and leaders measure the intensity of the organizing effort at their schools in terms of the presence of parents and community members in the schools. Parents' presence, even in informal and spontaneous ways, serves to maintain their awareness of school activities and progress, communication among teachers and parents, and school accountability.

In addition to appreciating parents for their important leadership contributions, the schools also become

more welcoming and respectful of all parents and community members. For example, the principal at Brooke Elementary explained that she keeps her door open and lets her staff and parents know that they don't need to schedule an appointment to meet with her. She measures her own success as a principal by the number of parents who just drop in to talk with her.

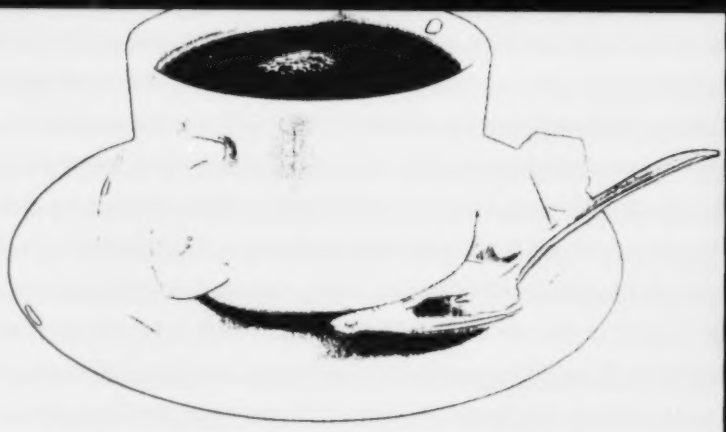
Regular "house meetings" at schools offer parents informal opportunities to talk with other parents and staff in the school building. When Alliance Schools feel the need to renew or intensify school/community relations, they often re-institute house meetings as a strategy to bring parents into the school. Zavala's new parent liaison increased the number of parents in the school after a period of decline by instituting Friday morning coffees. "We have coffee, we talk with other parents. We talk about how are the children doing. ...Then we talk to the principal."

Parents and Community Members Take on Meaningful New Roles in Schools

School professionals in general often complain about how hard it is to get parents involved. In light of research showing that parent "involvement" improves school climate and contributes to overall student achievement, schools across the country are looking for ways to increase parent involvement.

We found widespread agreement in Austin that, at Alliance Schools, parents were not merely involved but actually highly "engaged." Parent presence goes beyond standard forms of involvement, which are usually limited to volunteering in activities ancillary to the educational substance of schools, and extends to roles that are integral to the educational program. For example, parents at Zavala have regular weekly meetings with the principal. In several Alliance Schools, parents serve as tutors and even coordinators of the after-school programs. They have also brought in cultural opportunities, such as Ballet Folklorico. At Brooke school, a parent leader organized a Spanish-language storytelling program that brings Spanish-speaking parents into the library to read to children on a regular basis.

Most Alliance Schools have instituted the role of parent liaison. The person hired for this position is typically a strong parent leader who understands the job as developing leaders and inviting parents/



community members to participate in school decision-making, the PTA, Austin Interfaith actions, and so on. Alliance Schools' parents have also served as directors of after-school programs, with responsibility for financial and program management. They often draw on other parents to teach courses or provide experiences that reflect community culture and arts. Parents have participated in Alliance Schools training as colleagues with school staff members, both in the school and through attending conferences and Texas IAF training. Monies available through the Investment Capital Fund, in fact, are designated for joint teacher/parent learning opportunities.

Parents' presence in the schools brings many benefits. When parents gain a first hand knowledge of what goes on in the school and in classrooms, they become more sensitive to teachers' expectations and more effective coaches for their own children. In addition, children are inspired when they see their parents and other community members playing significant roles in the school. Finally, the school is more responsive to parents; parents who are familiar with the inner workings of a school can better hold the school accountable, and school staff are more likely to respect the opinions of parents with whom they are familiar.

Future Directions

As this report illustrates, Austin Interfaith can point to many accomplishments resulting from its school reform organizing. Austin Interfaith members and organizers note, however, that gains require continuing work to maintain and organizing is necessarily ongoing – particularly when it comes to relationships in the schools. Austin Interfaith has a strong track record and reputation for its work. It has added steadily to the number of schools in the network.

Nonetheless, organizers and leaders are intensely interested in deepening their work, specifically by bringing their vision of a relational culture, public accountability, and power analysis to what goes on between teachers and students in classrooms. This aim motivates Austin Interfaith to work with the Institute for Learning.

Looking forward, Austin Interfaith seeks to build on its successes both by reaching deeper into the transformation of teaching and learning and by going broader to develop "Alliance Communities" made up of feeder patterns of schools linked with member congregations. Ultimately, Austin Interfaith's goal is to "change the culture of the District" to reflect the values of Alliance Schools. Future directions must respond to a series of challenges that they have identified. These challenges fall into five categories: impacting the classroom level, extending the work to middle and high school levels, reinforcing links between schools and congregations as the focus of organizing, increasing the participation of African-Americans, and changing the culture of the District as a whole.

Impacting Teaching and Learning

Certainly much of Austin Interfaith's work has already had an impact on classroom practice, as teachers' expectations for their students have increased and they have started to use more challenging curriculum. Further, IAF leadership and researchers have given a great deal of thought to the implications of the "new" economy for teaching and learning, and have written about this in documenting the Alliance Schools philosophy and vision.

However, Austin Interfaith, reflecting the goals of the larger IAF organization with which it is affiliated, is continually working to refine and deepen its work. Austin Interfaith leaders and organizers see the classroom as a site where the principles and values of organizing can be applied more fully. In part, the motivation for this focus stems from a belief that the classroom is the crucible in which the success or failure of reform is determined. Austin Interfaith's role in organizing the annual in-service training for Austin teachers provides another opportunity for refining teaching and learning to fully reflect the concepts inherent in organizing and in the Alliance Schools approach.

Work with Schools in Feeder Patterns Including Middle and High Schools

While most of the Alliance Schools serve elementary students, Austin Interfaith is moving to work across the grade levels in order to address the needs of students after they leave elementary school. Since the development of the Young Scientists Program, which added a sixth grade to several elementary schools, members have been concerned about the quality of middle and high school programs for the majority of students who do not succeed in getting into the Kealing magnet program, and want to extend the reach of their work to students beyond the early grades. To this end, Austin Interfaith began encouraging collaboration between Webb, a middle school, and its feeder school T.A. Brown Elementary, as one component in a larger effort to link elementary, middle, and high schools. Austin Interfaith has also started a first phase of work in two high schools. One element of the strategy to move into other school levels is to place more leaders trained in Alliance Schools strategically into these schools.

Establishing "Alliance Communities"

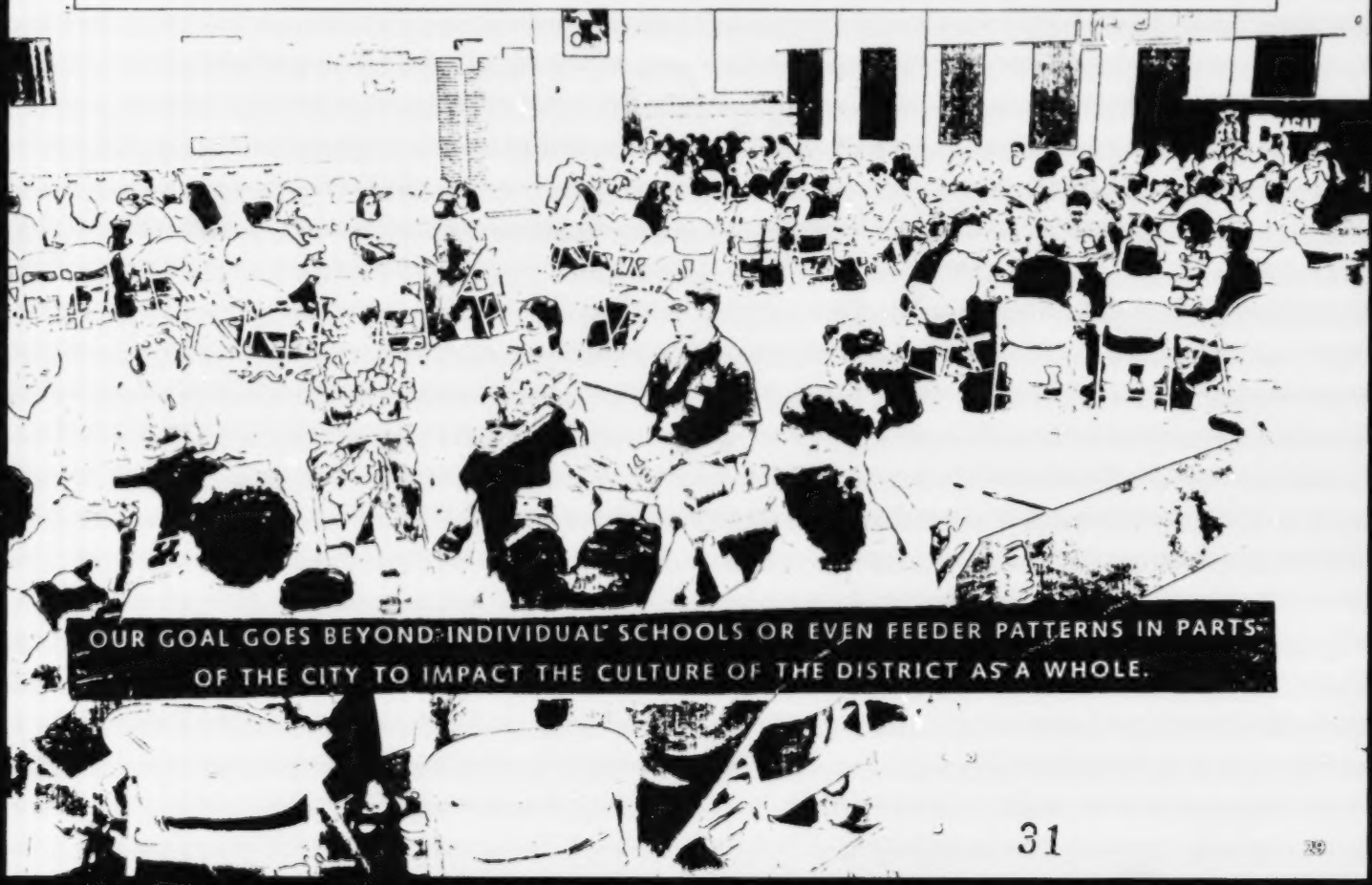
Austin Interfaith sees itself as a community organizing group, not an education organizing group, and schools as institutions (similar to congregations or labor unions) that have a direct impact on families and communities. Austin Interfaith's entry into education issues emerged out of its work in organizing congregations and links between congregations and schools have long been a feature of the work. Indeed, the early education-related efforts in Texas leading to the creation of the Alliance Schools Initiative involved congregations supporting schools by publicly rewarding students for achievement. Austin Interfaith believes in the importance of building and using social capital to strengthen communities, and linking community institutions is an essential element of its organizing strategy. In Austin, congregations have associated themselves with a set of schools in a feeder pattern, mostly within the congregations' geographic areas. These "Alliance Communities" become a kind of unit of focus for Austin Interfaith's work.

Increasing the Participation of African-Americans

Austin Interfaith's membership aim to ensure that schools reach and challenge all children, regardless of race and language fluency. The leadership of Austin Interfaith is proud of the progress that they have made in schools that have a predominance of Hispanic children, but are concerned that schools with large numbers of African-American students are not improving at the same rate. They note higher teacher and principal turnover as evidence that Austin Interfaith needs to give more attention to strengthening community support and relationships across race at these schools.

Changing the Culture of the District

Austin Interfaith leaders see their goal as going beyond individual schools or even feeder patterns in parts of the city to impact the culture of the district as a whole. It is not enough simply to work on changing individual policies one by one as issues emerge. Their goal is to have the entire district work in the same way as Alliance Schools—listening to the concerns of constituents, building and supporting leaders, operating openly and in a spirit of public accountability, respecting parents and the community, and seeing the intimacy of connection between schools and community. Austin Interfaith leaders have seen the benefits of establishing this kind of "relational culture" at the school level. Through the model of leadership development, which has sustained this culture within schools and extended it to other schools, they see the possibility of eventually extending it—not school by school, but in a more holistic way—to the highest reaches of the district. Yet, as with all of the work of organizing, such an effort implies ongoing and continual effort, not simply a program that can be adopted. Already, Austin Interfaith's intimate relationship with schools complicates the definitions of "outsider" and "insider" for Austin Interfaith as a community organizing group. Similarly, changing the district culture will present the challenge of maintaining a necessary creative tension in the relationship between Austin Interfaith and the district, as community leaders who are also School District employees gain increasingly strategic positions within the system.


OUR GOAL GOES BEYOND INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS OR EVEN FEEDER PATTERNS IN PARTS OF THE CITY TO IMPACT THE CULTURE OF THE DISTRICT AS A WHOLE.

Appendix A

Definitions of the Indicator Areas

Leadership Development builds the knowledge and skills of parents and community members (and sometimes teachers, principals, and students) to create agendas for school improvement. Leadership development is personally empowering, as parents and community members take on public roles. Leaders heighten their civic participation and sharpen their skills in leading meetings, interviewing public officials, representing the community at public events and with the media, and negotiating with those in power.

Community Power means that residents of low-income neighborhoods gain influence to win the resources and policy changes needed to improve their schools and neighborhoods. Community power emerges when groups act strategically and collectively. Powerful community groups build a large base of constituents, form partnerships for legitimacy and expertise, and have the clout to draw the attention of political leaders and the media to their agenda.

Social Capital refers to networks of mutual obligation and trust, both interpersonal and inter-group, that can be activated to leverage resources to address community concerns. Some groups call this "relational" power, while others describe this process as one of building "political capital." Beginning with relationships among neighborhood residents and within local institutions, community organizing groups bring together people who might not otherwise associate with each other, either because of cultural and language barriers (e.g. Latinos, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans) or because of their different roles and positions, such as teachers, school board members, and parents. Creating settings for these "bridging relationships" in which issues are publicly discussed is the key to moving a change agenda forward.

Public Accountability entails a broad acknowledgement of and commitment to solving the problems of public education. It is built on the assumption that public education is a collective responsibility. Community organizing groups work to create public settings for differently positioned school stakeholders—educators, parents, community members, elected and other public officials, the private and non-profit sectors, and students themselves—to identify problems and develop solutions for improving schools in low- to moderate-income communities. Through this public process, community organizing groups hold officials accountable to respond to the needs of low- to moderate-income communities.

Equity guarantees that all children, regardless of socio-economic status, race, or ethnicity, have the resources and opportunities they need to become strong learners, to achieve in school, and to succeed in the work world. Often, providing equitable opportunities requires more than equalizing the distribution of resources. Community organizing groups push for resource allocation that takes into account poverty and neglect, so that schools in low-income areas receive priority. In addition, groups work to increase the access of students from these schools to strong academic programs.

School/Community Connection requires that schools become institutions that work with parents and the community to educate children. Such institutional change requires that professionals value the skills and knowledge of community members. In this model, parents and local residents serve as resources for schools and schools extend their missions to become community centers offering the educational, social service, and recreational programs local residents need and desire.

High Quality Instruction and Curriculum indicate classroom practices that provide challenging learning opportunities that also reflect the values and goals of parents and the community. Community organizing groups work to create high expectations for all children and to provide professional development for teachers to explore new ideas, which may include drawing on the local community's culture and involving parents as active partners in their children's education.

Positive School Climate is a basic requirement for teaching and learning. It is one in which teachers feel they know their students and families well, and in which there is mutual respect and pride in the school. Community organizing groups often begin their organizing for school improvement by addressing safety in and around the school and the need for improved facilities. Reducing school and class size is another way in which community organizing groups seek to create positive school climates.

Appendix 3

Indicators Project National Advisory Group

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Leadership Development

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Identify and train parents and community members (and sometimes teachers, principals, and students) to take on leadership roles	
• Develop a second generation of leaders among school staff and community members, e.g., Alliance principals mentor teachers, parent liaisons seek new parent leadership, organizers and Alliance principles conduct "parent academies," and school staff and parents attend IAF training • Develop leadership skills and capacities of parents, teachers, and community members such as public speaking, targeted research, negotiation, relationship building, reflection and evaluation, etc. • Create structures and opportunities for parents, community members, and teachers to take leadership roles, e.g., core teams, membership on Campus Advisory Council, redefined parent liaison role, Austin Interfaith co-chair, etc.	• Parents and community members run public events and meetings • Parents and teachers take on new leadership roles • Increasing number of Alliance-trained school staff members • Alliance Schools vision sustained in existing schools • Growth in number of schools in the Alliance Schools network.
2 Develop parents (and community members, teachers, principals, and students) as politically engaged citizens	
• Carry out analysis of political structures within the school, district, and city • Engage community members in public actions, voting campaigns, school board and city council meetings	• Parents, teachers, and administrators demonstrate increased knowledge of political dynamics, can act strategically • Parents and community members demonstrate knowledge and skills at using the tools of democracy – setting agenda that reflects rights, meeting and/or negotiating with school and elected officials, etc.
3 Promote individual, family, and community empowerment	
• Win funding for and participate in designing educational opportunities for parents, teachers, administrators, and community members, such as ESL and GED classes, human development initiatives, conference attendance, joint professional development with teachers, etc.	• Parents recognize their own learning about education issues, their rights as citizens, and growth as leaders • Parents and school staff members demonstrate knowledge of school issues and effective instructional practice • Principals and teachers demonstrate knowledge of organizing practice • Parents and school staff members take on increasingly public leadership roles
DATA SOURCES	
• Observation of school board and city council meetings • Interviews and/or surveys with teachers, principals and other school staff • Interviews and/or surveys with parents	• Observations of principals' network meetings, Campus Advisory Councils, parent academies • Stories of leadership • Interviews with political leaders

STRATEGIES reflect actual work of the group.
RESULTS include actual outcomes that we identified and outcomes that the group expects.
DATA SOURCES point to ways to document both actual and expected results.

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Community Power

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Create mass base constituency within communities that results in deep membership commitment and large turnout	
• Bring in congregations, schools, and unions as institutional members of Austin Interfaith • Energize membership through winning on issues identified through one-on-ones, house meetings • Coach members on education issues and strategies for change through research and accountability sessions • Create structures for decision-making and to address issues that individual institutions can not take on alone, e.g., collective leadership, Interfaith Education Fund, etc.	• High turnout at public accountability sessions, actions, voting, etc. • Growth in number of institutional members • Acknowledgement of Austin Interfaith's ability to turn out large and diverse base of members
2 Form partnerships for legitimacy and expertise	
• Draw on IAF/Alliance Schools network state-wide for training and analysis of education issues • Build congregation/school partnerships to complement efforts on behalf of families • Partner with community college and city agencies to establish human development programs • Partner with the school district to adapt Institute for Learning principles in Austin schools	• Other schools seek advice/models on promoting community involvement and parent leadership • Programs and accomplishments are sustained over time • Growing recognition of Alliance Schools' capacity for reform, e.g., superintendent views Alliance Schools as testing ground for new teaching and learning model
3 Create a strong organizational identity	
• Promote shared vision and language • Practice evaluation and reflection • Sustain state-wide presence • Use stories of successful efforts to deepen members' connection to and understanding of the Alliance Schools' vision and mission	• Consistency across members in the language, stock of stories to illustrate or characterize Austin Interfaith's and Alliance Schools' work
4 Draw political attention to organization's agenda	
• Hold accountability sessions and other meetings in which candidates make commitments regarding Austin Interfaith's agenda • Turn out membership to push on issues such as bilingual policy, recruitment and retention of teachers, school construction issues, etc.	• Austin Interfaith is consulted or included in policy decision-making • School district and elected officials are responsive to demands, carry out and sustain commitments • Media coverage documents results of accountability sessions
DATA SOURCES	
• Records of attendance and commitments made at accountability sessions, meetings	• Media coverage: press, radio, TV • Interviews/surveys with politicians, journalists, school, community and political leaders • Observations of meetings and events

Social Capital

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Build networks	
• Facilitate the creation of collaborative networks within and across schools (e.g., Alliance principals, Curriculum Specialists, teachers through in-service and training opportunities, Alliance Schools Statewide)	• Network participants gain support from colleagues (encouragement, new ideas, etc.) for improving their practice
• Create "Alliance Communities" that connect congregations with schools as institutions that affect the well-being of families in neighborhoods	• Increased sense on the part of network participants of belonging to "communities" (learning/neighborhood)
• Engage parents, teachers, administrators and community together in organizing (e.g., accountability sessions, meetings with officials to carry out research and negotiations)	• Improved well-being of neighborhood families (economic, social, health, etc.) from concerted efforts of congregations and schools in addressing community issues
• Determine issues that cut across individual schools through Austin Interfaith Collective Leadership	• Parents, teachers, administrators and community gain greater sense of their common goals and interests
• Build relationships with school district, city, and state officials	• Greater diversity in participation in addressing community-wide issues
	• Increased ability of community members to meet with school or elected officials on matters of concern
2 Build relationships of mutual trust and reciprocity	
• Teachers, administrators and parents participate on core teams	• Mutual accountability for and stronger efforts to assure students' school success
• Teachers, parents and principal go on neighborhood walks	• Parents, teachers and administrators value each others' contributions
• Parents and teachers participate together in professional development	• Joint development of and support for reform initiatives
• Parents, teachers and administrators attend IAF/Alliance Schools training	• Alliance Schools called on to pilot new teaching and learning model (Institute for Learning)
• Austin Interfaith members meet with school district and elected officials	
• Increased perception of trust among professional educators, parents and community members	
3 Increase participation in civic life	
• Parents and community members analyze political landscape and meet with elected officials and candidates for research, commitments, and negotiations	• High turn-out at accountability sessions
• Parents and community members participate in get out the vote campaigns	• Increased resources for low-income schools
• Parents participate in bond votes in order to direct new funds to schools that serve low-income students	• Higher voter turn-out on election day among Austin Interfaith members
	• Austin Interfaith members gain greater awareness of local issues and political structure
DATA SOURCES	
• Interviews and/or surveys of perceptions of parents', teachers' and principals' sense of mutual trust	• Stories that record school, parents and community working together • Participant attendance at meetings, professional development, candidate forums, accountability sessions, etc

Public Accountability

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1. Create a public conversation about public education and student achievement	
• Identify shared concerns among community, parents, school staff via small scale community meetings, neighborhood walks, open meetings • Ask public officials/candidates to reveal positions on Austin Interfaith's agenda for reform in widely-attended accountability sessions • Parents, community members, and school staff research and discuss student achievement data, alternatives for improving teaching and learning • Teachers and parents establish mutual expectations to support student learning • Alliance Schools pilot Institute for Learning approach, based on teachers making expectations for children's learning public	• Parents, community members, and teachers work together toward common goals • Parents and school staff participate jointly in planning and decision-making about school improvement • Public officials are more responsive to parent and community demands • Students are more engaged as evidenced by higher attendance and grades and fewer disciplinary incidents • Greater congruence between student grades and state test scores
2. Monitor programs and policies	
• Foster parent presence throughout the school, e.g., core team, classrooms, committees, regular meetings with the principal, etc. • Promote parent membership on Campus Advisory Council • Build cadre of school leadership among parents and school staff • Gain influence over hiring principals and staff • Press for district to fulfill promise of Account for Learning funds (see above)	• Increased awareness and responsiveness of school staff to parent and community concerns • Greater parent presence in schools • Parents are more knowledgeable about student/school progress and issues • District is more responsive to parent and community agenda (e.g., creation of bilingual policy, quick remedy of construction problems) • Meetings focus on programs, policies, children's progress
3. Participate in the political arena	
• Study political arena to gain knowledge of candidates' and public officials' positions on issues of concern • Carry out get-out- the-vote campaigns • Hold accountability sessions with candidates for office • Lobby city and state legislators (e.g., Investment Capital Fund allocations)	• Increased participation in voting for school board, city council, and other elections • Increased awareness of members' of candidates' positions and the workings of the political system
4. Create joint ownership/"relational" culture	
• Build common understanding of goals and expectations among parents, teachers, and administrators through opportunities to make expectations explicit – neighborhood walks, home visits, joint participation in school planning, etc. • Engage parents in educational substance of school, e.g., tutoring and teaching in after school, participate in planning annual district-wide in-service session on Alliance Schools	• School staff and parents participate together in acting on common concerns • Parents, teachers, and students feel mutually accountable for students' school success • School staff see school and community as mutually supportive and increasingly call on Austin Interfaith and parents strategically to solve problems and support school needs • Increase in number of meetings including parents and school staff that focus on programs, policies, children's progress • Higher teacher attendance at Austin Interfaith events (actions, accountability sessions), PTA meetings • Increased parent involvement in academic experiences of children in school and out • Common stories about successes told and retold to sustain organizational identity and momentum

DATA SOURCES

- School/district policies
- Observations of meetings
- Interviews/surveys with parents, community members, school personnel
- Minutes and attendance records of school meetings/public actions/accountability sessions
- Voting records
- School and district records of grades and test scores

Equity

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Increase funding and resources to under-resourced schools	

• Win funding from city and state for
  ◦ After-school programs extending children's learning and providing adult education
  ◦ Spanish-language materials
  ◦ Community annexes (e.g., health center)
  ◦ Repairs and/or new facilities (e.g., playscapes)
  ◦ Teacher professional development (through state authorized Investment Capital Fund)
• Support vote for bond to build and improve facilities in low-income neighborhoods
• Push for full release of promised funds to low-income minority schools after busing for desegregation ended (Account for Learning)
	• Improved student school performance
	• Stronger family support for student learning
	• Safer facilities, e.g., safe playground equipment
	• More effective instruction in particular areas, e.g., math, collaborative learning techniques, etc.
	• New and renovated facilities in low-income neighborhoods
	• Greater equity in distribution of funds and quality of programs across school district

2 Maximize access of low-income children and adults to educational opportunities	
• Establish and win funding to implement district-wide bilingual policy • Call for challenging programs and curriculum to increase access to magnet programs and assure higher level courses at middle and high schools (e.g., Young Scientists Program) • Press for after-school programming that focuses on academics • Partner to establish adult education programs (e.g. GED, ESL and job training)	• Increased availability of Spanish language materials • Significant number of attendees in adult education classes • Greater number of students from low-income schools accepted to magnet programs • More rigorous curriculum and programs available in low-income and language-minority students
3 Match teaching and learning conditions with those in the best schools	
• Press for incentives to recruit and retain credentialed, high quality teachers in low-income schools • Call for reduced class size • Broaden accountability for student achievement	• Increased number and retention of credentialed, experienced teachers in schools with low-income, language minority students • Greater congruence between student grades and state testing scores • Improved student test scores
DATA SOURCES	
• School/district budget records • School/police incident reports • Interviews/survey of students, parents, administrators and teachers on perceptions of teaching quality, school safety, student learning	• School district records on teacher retention • Student grades and test scores

School/Community Connections

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Create multi-use school buildings	
• Win funding and commitment to use school buildings for after-school programs, a health clinic, adult education (ESL, GED, job training), community meetings, house meetings, parent academies, etc. • Parents and community members increased recognition of school as open to the community and parents	• Greater variety of community oriented programs offered locally • Community adults increased comfort visiting the school • Increased opportunities for social interaction among community
2 Position the community as a resource	
• Parents serve as teachers and administrators in after-school program and bring in local cultural resources • Parents and community members organize to obtain resources for the school, e.g., bilingual materials, new construction, etc. • Congregations partner with schools to support neighborhood families	• Greater perception of parents and community as a resource to the school • Increased parent and community member presence in school • Increased communication between parents and school staff • School staff partner with congregations for pre-school and after school programs and family support • School staff recognize they have a stake in community development
3 Create multiple roles for parents in schools	
• Strong parent leaders shape paid positions in Alliance Schools to recruit new parents as leaders (e.g., Parent Liaisons in Alliance Schools develop parent leadership and engagement in line with Alliance Schools principles • Engage parents in decision-making and school guidance roles on "core team" and on Campus Advisory Councils • Parents assume key roles in after school programs (directors, teachers, tutors, curriculum designers) • Parents meet weekly with principal	• Increased variety of roles for parents in the schools • Greater number of parents participate in school setting • School staff recognize and value parents' skills and knowledge
4 Create joint ownership of schools and school decision-making	
• Create opportunities for parents, community members, and school staff to learn about each other through neighborhood walks, house meetings, one-on-one meetings, etc. • Parents, teachers and administrators together engage in organizing efforts, e.g., accountability sessions, meetings with school district or city officials, etc. • Parents and teachers collaborate on program development, curriculum and teaching (e.g., Young Scientists and after school programs)	• Schools and congregations form alliances • Increased awareness of school personnel of challenges and resources in community • Increased collaboration among school staff, religious leaders, and community members on behalf of public schools and local families
DATA SOURCES • Observations • Teacher roster of after-school programs	• Interviews/surveys with parents, community members, and school staff about perceptions of the relationship of schools and community • Program and adult class attendance lists • Minutes of meetings • Flyers, leaflets, newsletters, etc.

High Quality Instruction and Curriculum

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Identify learning needs, carry out research, and recommend new teaching initiatives	
• Identify bilingual education needs across district, i.e., disjointed district policy, lack of materials and shortage of bilingual teachers • Call for and establish challenging, enriching academic programs (e.g., after-school programs, Young Scientist Program, Institute for Learning, multicultural learning) • Promote coherence across school years (e.g., add sixth grade to elementary schools, vertical alignment by building connections with middle and high schools) • Refinement and enforcement of district-wide bilingual policy • Increased number of bilingual teachers • Quantity and quality of bilingual instructional resources • Availability of challenging courses and programs	• Higher standards at lower grades in schools with Young Scientist program • Higher number of low-income and minority students in magnet programs • Alliance Schools sought to pilot new district initiatives (e.g., Institute for Learning) • Increased number of elementary schools with sixth grade • Broadened reach of Alliance Schools into more middle and high schools • Increased communication among teachers in feeder patterns • Sustained student progress through the grades
2 Enhance staff professionalism	
• Win state funding (Investment Capital Fund) that Alliance Schools can tap for teacher and parent training and planning • Create a "relational" culture in Alliance Schools that encourages collaboration (e.g., classroom cross-visitation and joint planning) • Develop and provide annual district-wide in-service training • Send teachers and parents to IAF training and conferences • Support a cross-Alliance Schools network of curriculum specialists • Build professional responsibility through identifying common goals with parents and community	• Increased teacher collaboration and joint planning • Teachers knowledgeable about and committed to Alliance School principles • Increase in teacher self-perception as respected professionals; sense of efficacy • Increased meetings between parents and faculty on academic issues
3 Make parents and community partners in children's education	

• Inform parents about school programs, classroom activities, and children's progress through:
  ◦ House meetings, home visits, and neighborhood walks
  ◦ Math and literacy nights
  ◦ Principal coffees with parents
  ◦ Joint teacher and parent workrooms
  ◦ Joint professional development
  ◦ Parent academies
• Use parents as resources for curriculum and instruction
  ◦ Jointly research and assess programs and pedagogical approaches
  ◦ Teachers make use of parents' knowledge of their own children and culture
  ◦ Parents teach in after school, read in library, or bring in cultural programs
• Educate and organize parents around student assessment
  ◦ Review test score data
  ◦ Include assessment among parent academy topics
	• Curriculum reflects students' cultures and experiences
	• Increased student academic success as measured by test scores, grades, attendance, motivation
	• Increased parent understanding of district policies and structures, school and state-level assessment and testing
	• Parents are more informed about school academic programs, such as math and literacy
	• Parents perceive that their ideas and skills are valued
	• Increased parent presence in the school and in classrooms

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
4 Hold high expectations	

• Hold meetings to discuss test scores, other types of assessment of student progress
• Increase parent-teacher interaction to reduce stereotyping of students' home lives and abilities/willingness to learn and parents' abilities/willingness to help them
• Develop strategies to increase access of elementary students to challenging programs in middle and high schools
  ◦ Implement Young Scientists Program in five schools
  ◦ Make teacher expectations explicit to parents and students through strategies such as the Institute for Learning's learning walks
  ◦ School, congregations, and communities reward students for achievement
	• Teachers develop more challenging curriculum at all grades in elementary schools with the Young Scientists Program
	• Improved student achievement as measured by grades, test scores
	• Alliance Schools are among highest performing schools in the district on TAAS assessment
	• Greater congruence between students' performance and grades and students' grades and performance on tests
	• Staff and parents perceive that schools standards are rigorous

DATA SOURCES • School curriculum documents • Surveys/interview of students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of curriculum relevance and rigor; on improvement in reading and math; and on strong teacher-student connections.	• Standardized test scores • Patterns of teacher attendance and staff turnover • School/district policies and programs • School district records on attendance at Alliance Schools in-service professional development • Parent attendance at math and literacy nights, parent academies, etc.

Positive School Climate

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Improve facilities	
• Win funding from city and district to build and renovate school playgrounds (playscapes) • Press for new facilities and renovations of existing schools	• Schools more well-equipped and attractive • Students, parents, teachers and community members perceive school environment as more respectful
2 Improve safety in and around the school	
• Build relationships among community members to identify common neighborhood safety concerns and address issues • Work with school staff to create safer arrival and dismissal procedures • Win funding from school district for new and safer playground equipment and attention to playground conditions in all schools	• Decreased number of accidents before and after school • Decreased number of incidents and violence in neighborhood • Students and parents perceive neighborhood, school as safer environment • Enhanced attention given to safety measures by school district, e.g. regular inspection of playground equipment at all campuses
3 Create respectful school environment	
• Principals facilitate participation by community members through open door policy, regular meetings with parents • Principals identify parent leaders to serve as parent liaisons who recruit other parents as leaders • Alliance Schools principals encourage open communication about classroom practice, openness for parent observation and participation • Work to establish a space in the school for parents, e.g., joint teacher and parent workspaces and meeting rooms with nursery equipment	• Increased parent perception that they are respected and welcome in the school • Increased parent and community member presence in schools • Parents are more knowledgeable about school programs and classroom activities • Reduced number of discipline problems • Increased student accountability for school success
4 Build intimate settings for teacher/student relations	
• Develop a vision for Alliance Schools that involves a change in the "culture" from bureaucratic to collaborative • Call for addition of 6th grade to Alliance elementary schools	• Increased sense on part of teachers and students that they are working as a team, plan together, engage in collaborative problem-solving as a model for what will be required in the current work-place • Students are better prepared for middle grades curriculum
DATA SOURCES	
• Survey/interviews of students, parents, school staff perceptions of school environment, safety • School district budget and policies (e.g., allocation of resources for school equipment, policy statements regarding safety protocols)	• Observations in school setting • Neighborhood crime statistics • School/district discipline records • Accident reports

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Elaine Simon, Ph.D., a Senior Research Associate at Research for Action, is an anthropologist who has conducted ethnographic research and evaluation in the fields of education, employment and training, and community development. She is Co-Director of Urban Studies in the School of Arts and Sciences and adjunct Associate Professor of Education in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. Her perspective on education is informed by her background in urban studies and community development. She followed the early 1990s Chicago education reform that devolved power to communities and parents and later the ambitious systemic school reform effort in Philadelphia. Her current research on community organizing for school reform builds on that knowledge and benefits from her broad perspective on urban life and urban school reform.

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Chris Brown is the Director of the Schools and Community Program at the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform. The Schools and Community Program works with parent and community organizations to increase meaningful parent and community involvement in school reform. He is responsible for providing training and technical assistance to organizations, overseeing research and publication projects, and coordinating cross-site visits. Before coming to Cross City, he served as Community Development Specialist at Chicago's United Way/Crusade of Mercy. Previously, he spent seven years as director of the ACORN Housing Corporation of Illinois, a non-profit group providing home ownership opportunities for low and moderate-income families in Chicago's Englewood community. In addition to his professional work with schools and communities, he also serves as a parent volunteer on the Local School Council of Boone School, the Chicago elementary school his two children attend.

Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform is a national network of school reform leaders from nine cities: Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Oakland, Philadelphia and Seattle. The Cross City Campaign is made up of parents, community members, teachers, principals, central office administrators, researchers, union officials and funders working together for the systemic transformation of urban public schools, in order to improve quality and equity so that all urban youth are well-prepared for post-secondary education, work, and citizenship.

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